

Gran torino: more than a car essay sample

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If you want to watch a movie about cars, you have your pick of many, many films. You can choose a movie with fast cars, American muscle cars, tuners, or any other type you can think of. At first glance, Clint Eastwood's Gran Torino, released in 2008, is just another movie about a muscle car; it has to be right? The title of the film is the name of a car. Actually, this movie is about so much more than that finely preserved piece of American muscle and automotive history. Together, Clint Eastwood and Warner Bros. Pictures created a masterpiece with this film's well portrayed characters, believable storyline, and universal message.

Gran Torino stars Clint Eastwood as the cantankerous, racist, Pabst Blue Ribbon guzzling, retired autoworker and Korean War veteran, Walt Kowalski. Walt lives with his golden Labrador retriever, Daisy, in the now crime ridden city of Detroit in the same house where he raised his family. From a conversation between Walt's sons, Brian and Mitch, "The point I am trying to make is, there's nothing anyone can do that won't disappoint the old man. It's inevitable. That's why we stopped doing Thanksgiving." it is evident the relationship between Walt and his sons is not a very pleasant one.

Walt's racism seems almost ingrained in his DNA, and he does not hesitate calling his immigrant neighbors any and every possible offensive and hateful name he can, such as 'gooks,' 'swamp rats' or 'zipperheads.' He makes no attempt to hide his distaste for his Hmong immigrant neighbors in what used to be an almost exclusively WASP (White Anglo-Saxon Protestant) inhabited neighborhood.

Walt's prized possession is his 1972 Gran Torino Sport, which he helped assemble during his days at the Ford assembly line. It represents some of the happier times in his life. When one of his immigrant neighbors, Thao Van Lor (Bee Vang) is pressured into stealing Walt's Gran Torino by a local Hmong gang, the old man realizes that he is going to have to do something to save his neighborhood. In the end, Walt winds up having a better relationship with Thao and his Hmong family than he ever had with his own sons. This film gives people hope that there is a way to break the seemingly endless cycle of drugs, gangs, and violence running rampant.

The characterization in this film is incredible, it is very easy to relate to the characters and be reminded of someone similar by them. This country is a melting pot, full of immigrants from every part of the world; so a once predominantly WASP neighborhood now being mostly populated by immigrants is happening everywhere. Walt is the grouchy old man who refuses to leave despite being the only Caucasian person on the block. If a thought crosses Walt's mind, the words are coming out of his mouth and he does not care one bit how offending or inappropriate his opinions or comments may be to those within ear shot; He even tells Father Janovich (Christopher Carley) what he thinks of him when Father Janovich asks him, "Do you have a problem with me Mr. Kowalski?" Walt replies, "You don't wanna know." Father Janovich insists, "No, I do." So, Walt lets him have it, "Well, I think you're an overeducated, 27 year old virgin who likes to hold old ladies hands and promise them eternity."

This movie has an extremely plausible storyline. Neighborhoods everywhere are overrun with violence, drugs, and other gang activity with seemingly no way to cease the problems. At first, Walt doesn't see anything he can do to rectify this either. However, curiosity gets the best of him and he talks to Sue about her family, the Hmong people, and how they came to live in the Midwestern United States. As he begins to interact with Thao, Sue, and the other Hmong members of the community, Walt comes to realize that something has to be done to save the young people from this life of crime and he is the man to do it. People from all walks of life can easily relate to this story. In opening up to these people, the walls Walt has built around himself begin to crack and crumble. In being forced to work together, Walt and Thao become good friends, learning from one another. Walt's character begins to change and leave behind his old ways, recognizing that the color of one's skin does not determine who they become.

The message in this movie is one that is universal. Though the film is not appropriate for young children, they could still learn from the message that is told. Gran Torino teaches people that there is always something that every person can do to change their surroundings. Eastwood's character evolves so much in this movie; he changes from a cold, hard, bitter racist to someone who embraces the world around him and who begins to see that people cannot be judged by the color of their skin. No matter the race of someone, or how big, small, old, or young, every person makes an impact on the world around them. In the end, Mr. Kowalski realizes the only way to find peace and leave his painful memories in the past is to finally face his own blinding prejudice head on. In this film, many issues people deal with every day in

modern day America are brought to light, such as discrimination, stereotypes, hatred, religion, gang violence, regret, and struggling to forgive one's enemies. This film is very powerful with a strong message, and at the end, one can just sit back and really think about the impact it all and the fact that it opens one's eyes to what the world is and how it can change a man and how he can make a change in the world.

Work Cited

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